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L. W. FULCHER, B.Sc.,
56, BUCKLEIGH ROAD,
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EDITORIAL.

THE sensation of the past few months—
attracting attention even amongst the
general public—has been the Official
Stamp case recently concluded. The
continued leakage of Official stamps at
last caused the Government to take drastic
steps to stop it, with a very effectual result, at
least for the present. It is a very unpleasant
business all round, not only for the persons
concerned but for the British philatelic world
in general. Yet the evolution of the affair is
simple enough. When the great officials of a
Government office are known to take official
stamps for the purpose of presentation to their
stamp collecting friends naturally the smaller
fry endeavour to obtain them likewise. At
first some are allowed official permission to have
specimens and then it gradually grows to
substituting ordinary stamps for official ones
without permission. This being no fraud but
merely "a breach of confidence" the
substituters expect that even if detected it will
be condoned. Finally, since there are people
willing to pay heavily for specimens, some less
scrupulous officials effect the substitution on an
ever increasing scale and are tempted to sell
their ill gotten gains, till at last the substitutions
even are effected by tricks which if not absolutely
fraudulent are so closely allied thereto as
to be indistinguishable, such as substitution by
pieces of mutilated "specimen" stamps for
the coveted articles—a practice to which the
two culprits pleaded guilty at the recent trial.
Then comes the penalty and terribly severe it
was in the present case.

It seems to us that the matter should not now
be left by the Government with the result
attained. Sooner or later the leakage will
begin again and like disastrous results will arise
therefrom unless some method is adopted to
prevent it. There are in our opinion only two
remedies (1) to stop overprinting stamps for
Government departments (2) if overprinting is

really necessary to sell such overprinted stamps
to collectors at face value. It has been widely
suggested that if the stamps were perforated
with initials nobody would collect them. We
cannot, however, agree with this suggestion.
If the stamps are perforated there are sure to
be some individuals who would want them.
There are collectors of the 1d. stamps perforated
with firms' names of which we gave a lengthy
list in recent numbers. Moreover, it is true
that Messrs. Stanley Gibbons do not catalogue
the stamp perforated with a crown and "B.T."
used by the Board of Trade, yet they do
catalogue and price a set of stamps for
Luxemburg perforated with the word "Official".
It appears therefore that the "perforated
method" will be useless. We should much
like to see all the official stamps abolished.
They do not, to us at any rate, present any
special interest and we could well spare them in
view of the alarming quantity of new issues
from all parts of the world. If this is
impossible, the sale of them, at face value, at
Somerset House would at any rate legitimize
the possession of these in mint state by
collectors and would knock the bottom out of
the tall prices which are paid for them.

* * * * *

If the authorities would go so far as to recognize
philately by selling official stamps to collectors
at face value we might perhaps venture to ask
for a further boon on behalf of those interested
in fiscal stamps. As far as we are aware
Scotch and Irish fiscals cannot be purchased in
London and there are various sets of English
ones which the average collector does not know
where to get. Could not all current fiscal
stamps be sold at Somerset House? There are
many who would appreciate this privilege.

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In the Fiscal Philatelic Society's list of India
two varieties of the provisional Foreign Bill,
12 as. on 12 rupees, 1901 issue, are catalogued,
one with the word 2½ mm. from the bar through
the value and the other with 4½ mm. between
the two. Mr. Corfield sends us a photograph
of similar variations in the 3as. on 8 rupees, in
one case the distance between the word and the
bar being 1½ mm. while in the other it is 2½ mm.
This opens up the possibility of variations in the
other values. Perhaps there was a London and
a local print of the surcharge in every case.

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We have been favoured by a correspondent
with the information that Revenue stamps for
Guernsey will be issued this month. Hitherto
Guernsey has been exempt from Stamp Duty of
any kind but a Stamp Duty Act has been
recently passed and will come into force on the
29th inst. when the "Treasurer of the States"
will issue stamps for the payment of the new
duties.

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Messrs. C. Nissen & Co., of 77 High Holborn,
London, W.C., inform us of their intention to
publish in November, the first issue of a new
yearly publication for Philatelists, to be known
as "The Stamp Collectors' Annual." This new
"Annual" will strive to become the
"Whitaker" or the "Hazell" of our hobby.
The price will be 1/-.